

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY KINGSTON PRIORITY

AMCONSUL PARAMARIBO PRIORITY

UNCLAS STATE 235145

E.O. 11652: N.A.

TAGS: MB, FR, BDIS

SUBJECT: SEIZURE OF TUG AND BARGES AT CAYENNE

1. DONALD DURAND OF INDIAN TOWING COMPANY, INC., NEW ORLEANS, HAS INFORMED DEPARTMENT THAT FRENCH AUTHORITIES IN CAYENNE, FRENCH GUIANA, HAVE SEIZED COMPANY'S TUG AND TWO BARGES IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS AND TAKEN THEM TO CAYENNE.

2. ACCORDING TO DURAND, COMPANY HAD CONTRACT TO TRANSPORT SHIPMENT OF US-MADE SAWMILL EQUIPMENT, BULLDOZERS, TRUCKS, ETC., VALUED AT ONE MILLION DOLLARS, FROM NEW ORLEANS TO COMPANIE FORESTIERE L'APPROUAGE (OF PARIS) IN CAYENNE. PARTIAL FREIGHT PREPAYMENT MADE IN NEW ORLEANS, WITH REMAINING \$100,000 DUE ON DELIVERY. WHEN TUG ARRIVED OFF CAYENNE, FINAL PAYMENT WAS NOT FORTHCOMING AND TUG AND BARGES WITHDREW TO SIXTEEN MILES OFFSHORE (REPORTEDLY VERIFIED BY LORAN READING) TO AWAIT DEVELOPMENTS.

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3. SUBSEQUENTLY, ACCORDING TO DURAND WHO RECEIVED INFO BY RADIO FROM CAPTAIN OF TUG, FRENCH GUNBOAT "GENDARMERIE" APPEARED, FIRED SHOTS ACROSS BOW OF TUG, REMOVED OPERATIONS MANAGER ALEX HENDERSON (HMG SUBJECT, US PERMANENT RESIDENT) AND FORCED TUG AND BARGES TO CAYENNE. NO ONE INJURED.

4. TUGBOAT "SHAWNEE" IS OF CAYMAN ISLAND REGISTRY; BARGES "ITCO 3379" AND "TROJAN" U.S. REGISTERED.

5. DURAND INFORMS THAT INDIAN TOWING COMPANY REPRESENTATIVE IN PARAMARIBO HAS VISITED CAYENNE. HE ENGAGED LOCAL ATTORNEY, BUT DID NOT CONTACT FRENCH GUIANA AUTHORITIES. DURAND IS ALSO ADVISING CAYMAN AUTHORITIES.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: EMBASSY PARIS AND CONSUL MARTINIQUE SHOULD SEEK EXPLANATION SOONEST FROM FRENCH AUTHORITIES AND ASCERTAIN THEIR INTENTIONS. APPROPRIATE STEPS SHOULD BE TAKEN TO RESOLVE PROBLEM AND PROTECT U.S. INTERESTS. KISSINGER

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